

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

This Document contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States, within the meaning of Title 18, Sections 793 and 794, of the U.S. Code, as amended. Its transmission or revelation of its contents to or receipt by an unauthorized person is prohibited by law. The reproduction of this form is prohibited.

25X1

SECRET

25X1

COUNTRY	USSR (Latvian SSR)	REPORT	25X1
SUBJECT	Housing and Living Conditions in Latvia	DATE DISTR.	30 June 1953
	25X1	NO. OF PAGES	4
DATE OF INFO.		REQUIREMENT	25X1
PLACE ACQUIRED		REFERENCES	

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
 THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
 (FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

25X1 Housing

1. The law allows each person to occupy nine square meters of living space in Lepaya. A family with a small daughter occupied an apartment consisting of two small rooms and a private kitchen, with a total area of thirty-one square meters. The apartment was heated by a wood stove which also served as cooking stove. There was no running water, as the municipal water system had not been repaired after the war. Water had to be carried from the street. The furniture in the apartment was of prewar origin and could not be replaced because of the high prices and the scarcity of household furnishings. The apartment contained a bed, night table, large table, four wooden chairs, a small couch, and a closet (sic, possibly wardrobe). The family also owned a prewar Singer sewing machine. The apartment rented for 37 rubles a month, not including utilities; electricity cost 16 to 20 rubles a month, and wood for the stove cost 80 rubles a cord.
2. The Russians have taken the best living quarters in Lepaya. If someone had relatives who had fled to the West, the Russians moved into his house, permitting the former owner only one room for himself. If the Russians moved, they frequently took the furniture with them, leaving the owner enough for his one room. The original owners could not complain because the flight of their relatives put them under suspicion.
3. It is impossible to move from one apartment to another without the official permission of the Housing Administration. The Lepaya Housing Administration is subdivided into a House Administration, which consists of forty separate (area) offices, and an Apartment Administration. If a person wishes to go to a new apartment, he must first find a landlord who is willing to rent to him. If the landlord accepts him, the prospective tenant must pay rent in order to reserve the apartment, even though he may not be able to occupy it for two or three months. He must then take the following steps:

25X1

SECRET

STATE ev	x	ARMY	x	NAVY	x	AIR	x	FBI		AEC		ORR ev	x	
----------	---	------	---	------	---	-----	---	-----	--	-----	--	--------	---	--

SECRET

- 2 -

- a. The prospective tenant obtains forms from the Apartment Administration on which to submit detailed biographic information.
- b. He then obtains a certificate from his place of employment (spravka s mesta raboty, or, in Latvian, darba vietas) and has to fill out a formal request for permission to move, stating the reason for the move. When the forms are filled out, he returns to the Apartment Administration to have the forms stamped, if permission is granted for the move. This office also sends notice of approval to both landlords in the case.
- c. The next step is to return to the intended place of residence to get additional forms from the landlord. These forms are presented to the Housing Administration by the landlord, and they include additional details on the family.
- d. The applicant then returns to his former place of residence and has the landlord deregister him. A representative of the landlord then accompanies him to the militia office, where the deregistration takes place, and the tenant's name is crossed out of the house register.
- e. The person then returns to his new place of residence, where a representative of the landlord takes the house register and accompanies the new tenant to the militia office. Registration is completed, a stamp is put into the house register, and the tenant is officially entitled to occupy his new apartment.

The above procedure may take two and one-half to three months. This same procedure is required when a person moves to a new city, although one is then expected to report to the militia within twenty-four hours. If this rule is violated, there is a minimum 300-ruble fine, depending on the time that has elapsed beyond the deadline.

- 4. Rather than comply with the complicated procedure involved in moving, many persons resort to the payment of "key money" to obtain new quarters. If a person occupies two or more rooms, he is allowed by law to take tenants to share the space. Depending on the apartment, the occupant will accept a tenant for about 800 rubles (a month). The original occupant then goes to the militia and deregisters from one room, leaving the tenant in sole possession and legally registered. This system bypasses the red tape.
- 5. Private houses can be purchased, but the prices are almost prohibitive. A house with two small rooms costs 8,000 rubles. Probably, the owner would also have to pay a State tax on his property every year.

General Living Conditions

- 6. Lepaya has a yacht club, the members of which usually sail on Lake Lepaya. They are not given permission to sail on the open sea, as they would all probably flee to Sweden at once. The Lepaya Yacht Club took part in a number of sailing contests in Latvia and the USSR. One such meet took place in Moscow. Housing conditions were so crowded in Moscow at that time that the club members had to sleep in the city parks.
- 7. Hunting in Latvia has practically ceased, because the Soviets reportedly have killed off the game. Small game is very scarce and deer are almost extinct. Inland, fresh-water fishing has been curtailed because the Soviets have removed the fish from lakes and rivers by using explosives to catch them. No restocking program is in operation. Portions of the coast are available to Lepaya inhabitants for bathing purposes. Areas containing defense installations are restricted zones.

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

- 3 -

8. No official permission is required to travel in Latvia or between Latvia and the USSR. Because of the requirement that a person register within twenty-four hours of entering a city, the militia is able to check on the whereabouts of everyone. The informants state that the militia always knows where a person has been, though they are not sure just how the militia knows.
9. Although doctors are not officially compelled to abandon private practice, they are forced to pay a quarterly tax of 30,000 rubles if they have a private practice. This tax has forced most doctors to join the staffs of polyclinics, where they receive 700 rubles a month.¹
10. Sixty-seven percent of the population of Lepaya is Russian, so that the Russian language is used to a great extent in the city. In the rural areas, the Latvian language is used more than Russian. The chairmen and secretaries of kolkhozy usually are of Russian nationality and make the kolkhozniki speak to them only in Russian.
11. The lumber industry in Latvia has been ordered to cut all commercial timber. The lumber is to be used for local construction, and the surplus is sent to the USSR. No plans have been made for reforestation; the land will not be cleared for farming because of the shortage of manpower, so the stumps presumably will be left and the crews will move into a new area. At this rate, the Latvian forests will disappear completely in four or five years. There are many wolves in the forests, especially in Nica parish.
12. A typical Latvian worker eats two meals a day, one in the morning before going to work, and one at night. The morning meal generally consists of "Stalin's cake" (black bread), which is heated in a frying pan with soya bean oil. The evening meal consists of vegetable soup, which is usually prepared without fat or meat and is eaten with black bread. All meat is destined for the army, but no one knows where it is actually sent. Occasionally it is possible to buy horsemeat for 7 - 8 rubles a kilo, and soup bones supposedly left from meat sent to the army may be purchased for 6 - 7 rubles a kilo. The man of the family usually handles the money. If the woman doesn't work, she spends part of her day standing in line for food. In order to buy horsemeat, it is necessary to stand in line for two to three hours; at the end of that time the supply may be exhausted, so that the process has to be repeated the following day. In order to purchase milk, one must stand in line for approximately one and one-half hours. Many persons carry old newspapers with them when shopping, to wrap their purchases in. No wrapping paper is available.
13. There is absolutely no private enterprise in Lepaya, it being impossible to sell even matches on the street corner. Officially, anyone under sixteen is permitted to work only six hours a day, but it is actually true that children work longer than that, and they do not dare to complain because they would run the risk of losing their jobs.
14. The beauty shops in Latvia are patronized by both Soviet and Latvian women. Most women go to them to get their hair cut, but many also get permanents, which cost about fifteen rubles. The permanents are given with an old, prewar-made, electric machine, and the hair is often singed. These permanents last only three months. The main topic of conversation in a Latvian beauty shop is foreign fashions. Because MVD informers are known to be present, women do not discuss politics or their husbands' work. The wives of Soviet officers who have had service abroad often own one or more foreign fashion books, which they value highly. They often take these books to a local seamstress and request that a dress be made on the pattern of a picture in a fashion magazine.

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

- 4 -

15. The typical dress of a Latvian woman is of cotton during the summer and of rayon or flowered silk during the winter. The most common cotton material is a floral print on a black background; this is a coarse material, and the design may disappear at the first washing. Because of the high cost of clothing, most Latvian women purchase only one dress a season, the wealthier ones being able to afford two or three a season. Dresses may be purchased at clothing artels or ordered from a private tailor. In both cases the customer must furnish her own material, thread, and buttons. A private tailor charges 50 rubles to make a cotton dress and 100 rubles for making a rayon or silk dress; the clothing artel charges 160 rubles to make a dress, of which the individual tailor or seamstress gets 70 rubles.

16. Women's hose are made of caprone and are manufactured in the USSR. These hose are poorly made and often come apart at the seams after being worn once. The color of the hose is not uniform, so that rings of different shades appear on all hose, and often the individual stockings in a pair are completely different colors. Such stockings cost about 40 rubles a pair.

17. Woolen material of medium quality is imported from Czechoslovakia. This quality material costs 350 rubles a meter. Lining material of medium quality rayon costs about 50 rubles a yard, and cotton goods for pockets, etc., costs 15 rubles a meter.

18. Shoes with crepe rubber soles are imported from Czechoslovakia. They are of medium quality and cost about 350 rubles a pair. Shoes made in Lepaya are inferior in quality, stretch when wet, and cost about 160 rubles a pair. The soles usually are made in three layers of thin leather, and separate on getting wet. Women's shoes are made with a medium heel, cover the instep, and have laces. The basic pattern is the same as that of men's shoes. No other style of shoe is seen on Latvian women.

25X1 19. [redacted] a seamstress for the wife of a man who had been a member of the Communist Party for eighteen years. One day, in order to find out if the woman thought a war was coming, she asked the Soviet woman's advice on purchasing a house on the outskirts of town [redacted]

25X1 [redacted] The wife of the Communist replied that a war was coming, and [redacted] to buy suitcases instead, since "all Latvians will be deported to the USSR in the event of a war". The facts that the [redacted] with eventual deportation and had little prospect for establishing security for their families in Lepaya were primary reasons for their decision to flee the country.

25X1 [redacted]

25X1

SECRET